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Audubon Signature Gold Program- Conversation with Dr. Bud Smart

Dona Bentzien

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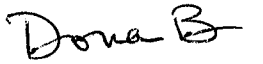
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December 15, 1998

TO: John Brooks
Department of Athletics

FROM: Dona Bentzien 
Department of Recreation

SUBJECT: Signature Gold Program--Conversation with Dr. Bud Smart

After some delays (and miscommunicated messages), I spoke today with Dr. Bud Smart, senior technical person for the Audubon Signature Program. I explained the nature and scope of the planned Golf Management and Learning Center, target dates for construction, desire for environmental excellence, etc. Dr. Smart was informative and positive, answering questions with as many specifics as he could provide at this point. He seemed genuinely interested in personal involvement with development of the GMLC.

Audubon has certain established fees for their professional/technical efforts in plan development once the landowner (UNF) has registered for the Signature Gold status. Once awarded, this status signifies that the project is one of the few golf courses in the world which is a model demonstration site for sustainable resource management. To achieve this designation, the project must be registered before siting and design, to afford optimum opportunity for a comprehensive approach to environmental planning. Audubon International begins working with the project manager and other representatives as soon as the project is registered. Their mission is to prepare an Environmental Master Plan for the project with five major documents:

- Sustainable Resource Management Guidelines
- Ecological Design
- Natural Resource Management Plan
- Community Education and Information Plan
- Sustainability for Built Environments

Once the Master Plan is in place and implemented, the project is granted the "Gold Seal of Sustainability" upon its opening. The cost of development of the Master Plan is contingent upon the size, scope, and complexity of the proposed development. (The registration fee for involvement in the program is \$9,000 plus the initial annual fee of \$500.) In conversing with Dr. Smart on guestimates for Master Plan development fees, he said that the GMLC will be able to come in with much reduced fees because of several factors. (The fee for plan development for a full 18-hole course with club house and some adjacent residences is generally \$150,000.)

Dr. Smart recognized that this is a university-based site, and--in response to his inquiries--I explained the likelihood that university faculty, students and some staff may be able to accomplish much of the work that Audubon may normally be asked to accomplish. For example, Dr. Toni Rossi and students (and select Preserve staff) are already working to gather baseline data at the site, running transects and identifying plant species found there. Studies are already being formulated on pitcher plants at the site--carnivorous plants of great interest to many researchers. Additionally, wetlands delineation for the targeted site has already been completed, I explained to Smart. If we have Geographic Information System (GIS) capability at the university, this will further reduce costs--as we can then enter, store, and read/print-out data on various plant and animals species, habitat types, soil types, hydrology, and other appropriate parameters at the site. (In my view, we could look at Audubon's needs and criteria to determine

what things, if any, are beyond the confines of our own capabilities at the university--such as possibly GIS mapping, and then strategize on how to accomplish it through the community.) Additionally, John and I are capable of developing and implementing the education and information component, with guidance from Audubon (with little time consumed for this element on their part). Smart said this should render the costs for this component minimal.

With much capability and willingness to work here at the university, Smart believes they can focus their efforts on completing a Master Plan with about 8 site visits. His estimate is that costs will range from \$30,000 to \$50,000, depending on time commitments imposed on Smart and the team leaders and other professionals they will have to utilize. (A team leader is assigned for each component, who then develops goals, objectives, and an overall vision appropriate to its criteria while working with university and other selected representatives.) Working with whole systems, infrastructure issues, and the overall ecological design will likely consume the bulk of Audubon time. Smart's best guess was that the project might come in at a cost of around \$38,000. (Their travel and lodging is separate.)

Smart was very positive in his approach, and I liked his comments on the way they like to work with the project developers as a team--with all players becoming stakeholders in the project. Input is sought from all, so that consensus is integral to work toward plan development and approval. They don't, in other words, just come in and tell the golf course developers how or what to do; rather, they encourage input and are accustomed to innovative strategies in making the golf course/environmental quality marriage a lasting one. He knows that this area is one of the golf capitals of the country, is familiar with Florida habitats, and wants to be personally involved in seeing us to successful completion. He also was sympathetic in that universities don't always have extra funds to cover these kinds of expenses.

The need for hiring a natural resource manager was also mentioned during the conversation. [Note: As mentioned to you by phone, John, I could devote approximately 15 hours a week or more as time allows to serving in a coordination/liaison capacity for you (until funds become available for a part-time natural resource manager, or until construction begins). Inasmuch as John and I work closely together, and as he is the expert on the habitat and natural resources at the site, my biology background and experience as a project coordinator should complement John's expertise, so that you would have the benefit of us both to keep track of natural resource details, while I can also coordinate research/grant efforts and resource management needs. I hope you will seek John's input on this.] As we also discussed, I think it may be beneficial to you to begin assembling a committee of persons who could provide professional input as plan development under the Signature program begins (1) to begin forming partnerships within the university as well as with the community at large to begin planning strategies for developing a learning center which truly is an environmental-quality model for our region, (2) to begin formulating and refining research needs compatible for Audubon Signature goals and to conceptualize relevant grant proposals, (3) to approach fundraising by marketing the cost-saving benefits of having an environmentally-sustainable golf course with minimal pesticide use, watering, mowing, maintenance, etc., and (4) to address other future management needs.

Finally, Dr. Smart said that, having heard about the project and the support for involvement in the Signature Gold, he will likely approve the application when it arrives without delay. He was to ask Nancy Richard (Signature Gold program director) to FAX us the registration form so that it can be submitted without delay when the fee is approved. They can then begin working with us.

cc: J. M. Golden
B. Purser
A. Rossi